

# ASAP Annual Report

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**1 October 2017 – 30 September 2018**



## Key Achievements

The Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) delivers information, advice and support to members of the Armed Forces Community through a Scotland wide helpline and face to face casework in 11 regions. The service is made possible by the funding partnership, led by Poppyscotland, with whom we work closely to develop the service and ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the clients we support.

### Key statistics for the period 1 October 2017 - 30 September 2018

- Advisers helped 2550 individuals over the year, supporting them with over 12,500 new and repeat issues. This resulted in an average of
  - 6.2 issues per client for face to face advice in the regions,
  - 1.5 issues per client for the helpline.
- 49% of issues raised were about benefits, 14% concerned debts. Financial issues, including charitable grant applications, accounted for 11% of issues raised, and housing 6%.
- Clients may gain financially as a result of the support they have received, for example through receiving benefits to which they are entitled, debt written off or rescheduled or charitable grants received. Client financial gain recorded over the year was £2,390,357. A total of 634 clients benefited from a financial gain; the average financial gain per client was £3770.

From the start of the service on 1 July 2010 to 30 September 2018, ASAP has supported a total of 13,672 individual clients with around 69,800 new and repeat issues. The client financial gain since the start of ASAP is £11.7 million.



## Regional performance

**Table 1: Number of clients in each region**

Region	October – December 2017	January – March 2018	April – June 2018	July – September 2018	Total across 4 quarters
Citizens Advice Direct National Helpline	115	130	242	208	695
Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire	52	48	49	54	203
Argyll and Bute	28	24	30	32	114
Ayrshire			42	63	105
Edinburgh and Lothians	80	93	101	102	376
Falkirk	48	67	70	60	245
Fife	88	117	123	138	436
Inverness, Moray and Nairn	60	90	80	80	310
Lanarkshire	130	133	140	150	553
Renfrewshire	65	58	56	45	224
Stirlingshire and Clackmannanshire	43	47	46	52	188
Tayside	74	86	97	85	342
<b>Total</b>	<b>783</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>1076</b>	<b>1069</b>	<b>3821</b>

Notes:

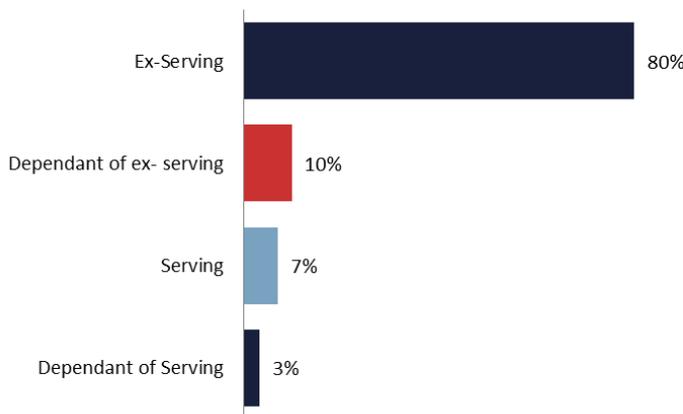
- The ASAP service in the Falkirk area is jointly funded by Falkirk Council and the ASAP funding partnership.
- The service in Ayrshire started in April 2018 and is funded by a grant from Libor for an initial period of 12 months.
- The figures are for the number of people seen in each quarter, counting each person once no matter how many times they are seen in the quarter.
- As our clients have complex support needs advisers tend to see them for multiple appointments which can be spread out over many months. This means that a client may be seen in more than one quarter. If this is the case, they will be counted in each quarter and added into the total figure.

## Our clients

The people seen vary between regions, depending on the proximity of bases and where veterans settle. Nationally, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of clients with a Navy or Marine background, and decrease in the proportion with an Army background.

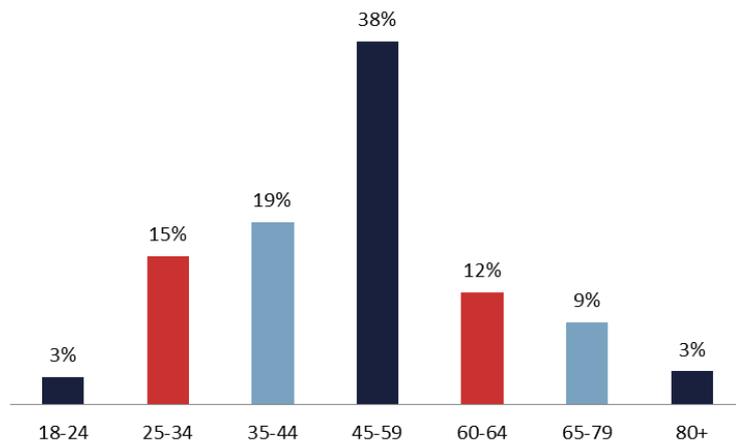


In the last year, we supported proportionately more people who have served or are serving, and fewer of their dependants.



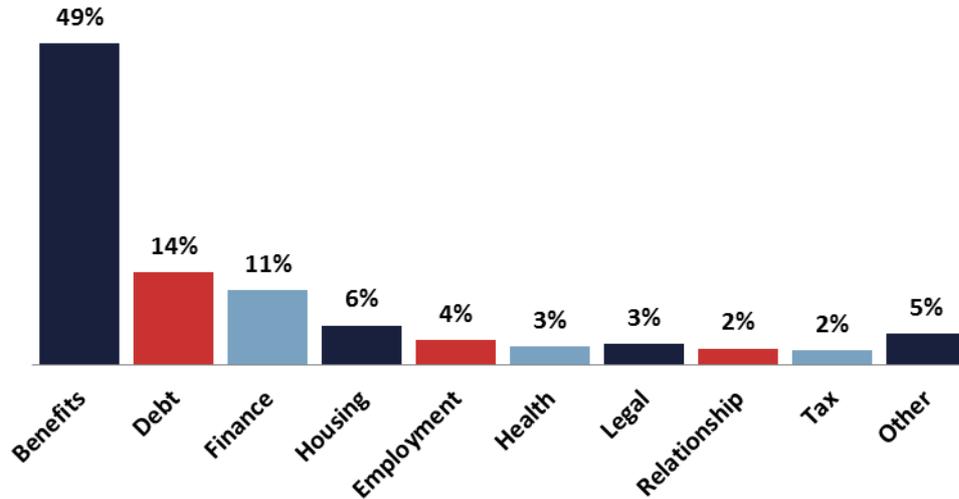
The number of individuals supported over the year is down slightly on the previous year, but there has been a considerable increase in the number of issues recorded. This, set against a background of Citizens Advice recording changes which reduced the number of issues recorded, indicates that ASAP is supporting vulnerable people who present with multiple problems. Feedback from advisers is that bureaux, and ASAP, are increasingly seen as both the first and last resort for clients with complex problems, with people presenting with greater crisis, hardship and immediate need than previously.

**Figure 1: Age range of clients**



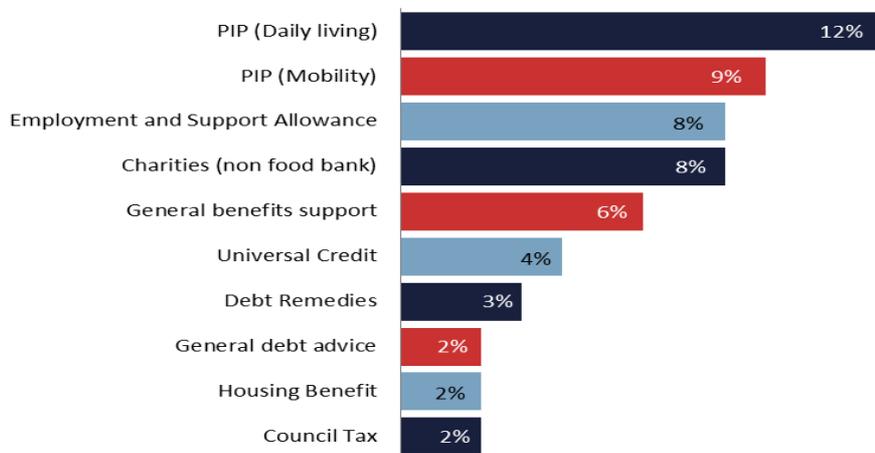
## Advice needs of ASAP clients

Figure 2: 12,596 new and repeat issues raised by clients



The proportion of benefits and debt issues recorded by ASAP has increased over the year, while the proportion of other issues, such as housing and health, has declined. ASAP clients raise proportionately more benefits issues, with 43% of all bureau issues relating to benefits, but fewer debt issues, compared to 17% of all bureau issues.

Figure 3: Top 10 advice issues



Universal Credit issues have started to increase, with the full service roll out across Scotland. As this replaces six existing benefits, including Housing Benefit, the proportion of these is likely to continue to reduce. Other issues include gas / electricity problems, Attendance Allowance and food bank applications, all at 2% of issues raised.

## Who we've worked with

ASAP is an integral part of the support network for the Armed Forces community in Scotland. Our strength lies in our ability to work with a wide range of organisations to support our clients, whether Service related, statutory or voluntary, bridging the gap between the Service experience of our clients and the civilian world.

In the last year we have continued to work with a number of partner organisations at a national level, including Police Scotland to support the Veterans Referral Scheme. At a local level our advisers work with a wide range of organisations, providing outreach sessions in veterans centres, residences and breakfast clubs, doing training and presentations, attending events and providing joint support for clients. These include partnership meetings with prisons and advising prisoners, and involvement in the re-establishment local Firm Base meetings, as well as close relationships with various local authority departments to both access support for clients and encourage referrals. They also provide support for serving personnel, working with the welfare staff to provide what is seen as a unique service.

Advisers can record referrals into and out of ASAP when working with other organisations to support clients. These are not routinely recorded for every client, so the data below indicates the range of organisations we work with rather than representing the complete picture.



### Most common referrals into ASAP

Self-referral / word of mouth	30%
Within CAB service	16%
Other Service related charity	10%
SSAFA	8%
Veterans First Point	8%

The bureau network provides many specialist services, for example debt, energy or housing advice, and tribunal representation. Some of this is provided directly by ASAP advisers, and in other cases ASAP facilitates access to these services.



### Most common referrals from ASAP

Within CAB service	29%
SSAFA	16%
Other Service related charity	12%
Veterans UK	6%
Veterans First Point	5%

## Unforgotten Forces

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**UNFORGOTTEN  
FORCES**

Supporting Scotland's  
Older Veterans

ASAP is part of the Unforgotten Forces Consortium, and works closely with partners including the Defence Medical Welfare Service and Age Scotland to support mutual clients. ASAP provides support for older veterans across the regions and through the helpline, with outreach in local hospitals and centres for older people. Bureaux not already involved in ASAP are supported to engage with older veterans, for example with training provided to a number of staff and volunteers in Dumfries and Galloway CAB to build awareness of the issues faced by veterans and the wider support available to them, and support provided to Caithness CAB to raise awareness of veterans issues.

The UF Volunteer Support Officer has developed a new suite of training materials specifically for Unforgotten Forces, used by both ASAP and non-ASAP bureaux.

## Training our advisers

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ASAP advisers are dealing with a particularly vulnerable client group, which means that they need a specialist skill set in addition to general advice skills and a detailed knowledge of matters relating to the Armed Forces. All advisers have access to the specialist bureau courses, for example in employment and welfare rights. Regular training days are arranged for advisers with speakers from a range of organisations to foster new partnerships and ensure they are aware of the services available. Advisers complete the Mental Health First Aid for the Armed Forces course, and take advantage of other courses as they arise, including Veterans in the Criminal Justice System and the Age Scotland Dementia awareness.

The UF Volunteer Support Officer, together with the CAS training team, produced e-learning modules to support Unforgotten Forces. Training units about the needs of the Armed Forces community are available to all bureau advisers across Scotland.

## Service developments

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A new area was established in Ayrshire in April 2018, working closely with the Poppyscotland office in Kilmarnock. They have already supported a significant number of clients, and continue to develop the service, adding new outreach surgeries.

CAS and Poppyscotland are undertaking a strategic review of ASAP to inform future funding renewal and ensure that ASAP continues to meet the needs of clients and work collaboratively with new services as they are developed.

## What we've done for clients

The ASAP helpline provides a wide range of advice to clients, and can support those who are able to use the information provided to resolve their situations themselves, and make referrals for face to face support:

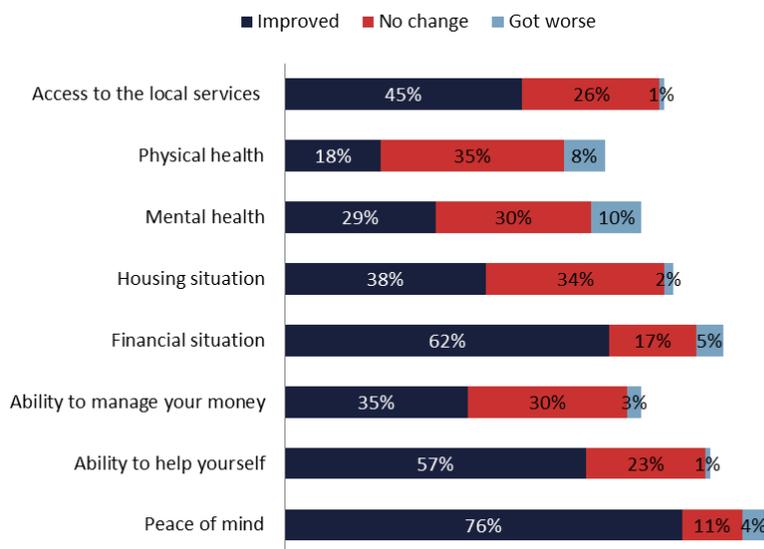
*An Army veteran with physical health problems contacted the helpline looking for information with which to challenge the inclusion of a war disablement pension in a council financial assessment for Self-Direct Support payments, as the inclusion of the pension payments would reduce his ability to pay for additional care. The helpline adviser provided appropriate information and links to guidance on the council website, which the client sent on to the council. The client stated that our 'help has proved invaluable' as he received an apology from the council, and a revised calculation.*

Bureau based advisers deal with complex cases, supporting clients with multiple issues:

*A veteran and his partner were referred to ASAP by SSAFA, after major surgery left him with a number of life changing medical conditions resulting in time off work and consequent reduction in income. The ASAP adviser met the couple on numerous occasions, and was able to provide support with claiming appropriate benefits for each person, a Power of Attorney for the partner to help manage the client's affairs, a referral to the Veterans Welfare Service for a reassessment of the war disablement pension, the partners State pension contributions and Council Tax exemption. They have achieved good outcomes and financial gains for the client as he was unaware of what was available, and continue to provide support as the situation develops.*

We ask our clients what they thought about the service we provided, and the impact it had on their lives. In the last year 115 clients responded with very positive feedback: 90% rated the service as very good and 3% as good.

**Figure 5: Outcomes achieved for clients**



The bureau service uses the evidence base provided by client to feed into relevant policy decisions. Recently, ASAP in Lanarkshire submitted evidence to the UK Government Inquiry into Mental Health and the Armed Forces. With the challenge of an extremely tight deadline of two weeks they issued a short survey to ASAP service users seeking their views on the provision of care for members of the Armed Forces community experiencing mental health issues, receiving 52 responses (21% response rate). The feedback was excellent with many contributors expressing emotive and heartfelt insight of their own experiences. The collated results were sent to House of Commons Defence Committee inquiry on Mental Health and the Armed Forces.

The comments our clients make demonstrate the value of the service we provide to them:

*"This service has been invaluable to my husband and I since autumn of last year. We were left with a worry when our son that we lived with was admitted to hospital, being able to provide him with extras and as he was moved 3 times to further away hospital, being able to afford to visit him etc., the ASAP adviser came to our rescue. Obtained forms to enable us to cope, with the benefits we were given to help with our care too, she continues to keep in touch so we say thank you so much ASAP.... We had no knowledge of what help was available until the adviser came along and waved her 'magic pen'."*

*"They are a very good service I would highly recommend to other military veterans. They also have good contacts to help in other situations also. Thank you so much."*

*"Being able to talk to someone who understood the armed forces is comforting and informative."*

Prepared October 2018

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